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Nkrumah's Tragedy

*His People's Catalogue of Grievances
Eclipsed His Feats as Nation's Builder*

By LLOYD GARRISON

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LAGOS, Nigeria, Feb. 25—

Over the years Kwame Nkrumah has seemed increasingly destined for the tragedy of a man whose dreams could never catch up with reality.

The army, which overthrew him and his nine-year-old dictatorial regime yesterday, had accumulated a huge catalogue of grievances: The army

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itself had become Mr. Nkrumah's political tool abroad and his virtual bodyguard at home. Ghana had begun independence the richest of all black African states and is now bankrupt. Once Ghana had a two-party system and it became one, the Convention People's party.

Once there was a free press and the right of free assembly, and in its place came Mr. Nkrumah's detention acts. In the place of free elections he called a nationwide referendum in 1964 to install the C.P.P. as the sole government authority—the fraudulent result was so blatantly rigged that even his warmest supporters blushed at the 98.5 per cent margin.

When the judiciary exercised its independence in acquitting three men Mr. Nkrumah had accused of treason, he dismissed the Supreme Court and made himself the final arbiter of appeal.

Such are some of the bare outlines of Mr. Nkrumah's political obituary. But the events of his political lifetime were not always so uncreditable.

Always a Loner

He was always a loner. As a young foreign student at Lincoln University, Mr. Nkrumah refused a part in the school play unless he got the lead; later, roaming Harlem in the depression years, he slept in subways and melted into the mass of those who lined up at Father Divine's soup kitchens.

He left America with a love-hate relationship in which the hate trend gained ground in later years; President Kennedy was the last American of any stature he really respected—and perhaps Edgar F. Kaiser, who is building an aluminum smelter in Ghana and who helped Mr. Nkrumah get Mr. Kennedy's backing for the Volta River power project.

He returned to Ghana by way of the London School of Economics, where he deepened his devotion to the ideals of Marx and Pan-African revolution.

He was an immensely popular man in Ghana, so much so that the British jailed him along with J. B. Danquah, his political mentor. Now "J.B." is dead, a victim of his friend's detention camps.

For a time, Mr. Nkrumah was Africa's brightest star. After independence he made Ghana a haven for other nationalists still in exile. His was the most eloquent voice in the anticolonial struggle.

He built schools and hospitals and all but doubled his country's literacy rate. Scores of state-owned corporations were established, along with a government-owned airline and shipping line.

But all but a handful lost money. Barter deals with the Communist bloc were struck in return for often useless equipment and unwanted consumer goods; in the end Mr. Nkrumah had all but mortgaged his cocoa and gold and timber resources either to the bloc or to European lenders he had relied on to bail him out of his mounting debts.

The rest of Africa watched, noted the decline and detected the new shrillness in Mr. Nkrumah's voice.

He was not content with ruling Ghana. His Socialist vision broadened to embrace all of Africa under one government—under Kwame Nkrumah. Slowly but surely he came to be resented—or laughed at—in all but a few African capitals.

In the French-speaking states he was Nkrumah the demagogue, a man who would stop at nothing, including the use of subversion to overthrow his critics. Here in Lagos he was the subject of frequently funny and extremely biting satires by some of Nigeria's most talented playwrights.

Twice he escaped assassination at home. Each time he blamed "neocolonialism."

In his latest book "Neocolonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism," he labeled the International Bank for Construction and Development, from which he was seeking a loan, an agency of imperialism; Peace Corps volunteers were seen as

spies and Sargent Shriver was called an agent of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Ghana was littered with his image; life-size statues were erected and his name adorned government buildings, public squares, schools and ideological institutes and highways. There was no escaping Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana. He was "His Messianic Majesty," "the Saviour," "the Leader."

His people saw it as a world of unreality. Some, even within the rubber-stamp Parliament, rejected it openly. In their last

September session, one member after another got up to denounce nepotism and corruption within the party hierarchy.

In the end, it was not any single policy or wrong that Mr. Nkrumah had committed that brought him down. It was his mounting capacity for self-delusion that moved others to realize with desperation that Mr. Nkrumah had reached, in his own mind, a point of no return.

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